

Abstract of the Disclosure

5 An electronic document retrieval system and  
method for a collection of information distributed over a  
network having documents stored in web or document  
servers in which an access control list relates user  
identification to documents to which a user has access.  
No access control lists are contained in the documents  
themselves nor are comparisons made between lists of  
10 users, with their access levels, and the classifications  
of documents. Rather, by the use of URLs or pointers, it  
is possible to associate every document to which a user  
has access with the user identification number or code.  
URLs have a hierchical format which allows partial URLs  
15 to indicate levels of access. HTTP protocol, FTP and CGI  
protocol employ URL calls for documents and can use the  
access control method and system of the present inven-  
tion. When a search query is applied to a query server,  
a list of hits is returned, together with pertinent URLs.  
20 The query server consults each access control list  
associated with each document server, to present to the  
user only those URLs for which he has a proper access  
level. Other URLs for which the user does not have  
proper access are kept hidden from the user.